



Department of Justice

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Grafton Man Extradited to Canada on
Child Sexual Assault and Child Pornography Charges

FARGO - United States Attorney Timothy Q. Purdon announced that on March 17, 2011, **Lon Patrick Ritzo**, of Grafton, North Dakota, was extradited to Canada by the United States Department of State to face pending Canadian criminal charges in the Province of Saskatchewan. Ritzo, a United States citizen, was extradited to Canada, where he is facing sexual assault and related charges involving a minor male who was 11 or 12 years old at the time of the assaults. The charges were filed in October of 2007 in Saskatoon. Ritzo was also charged in January of 2007 in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, with possession of child pornography, following the execution of a search warrant at his residence in May of 2006. Ritzo left Canada and returned to the United States in September of 2006 after the search warrant was executed, but prior to the filing of Canadian criminal charges and issuance of arrest warrants against him.

In 2009 Canadian authorities sought Ritzo's extradition to Canada from the United States under the Extradition Treaty between the United States and Canada. A request seeking Ritzo's extradition under the Treaty was submitted by Canadian authorities in the Province of Saskatchewan to Canada's Central Government in Ottawa.

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In November of 2009 Canada submitted a formal request for extradition through the Canadian Embassy to the Department of State in Washington, D.C. In December of 2009 the U. S. Department of State submitted Canada's extradition request to the U.S. Department of Justice, which referred the request to the U. S. Attorney's Office in North Dakota, where Ritzo was believed to be living at the time.

On December 21, 2009, an Extradition Complaint was filed in U. S. District Court in Fargo, ND, and an arrest warrant was issued for fugitive-defendant Ritzo. Ritzo was arrested in Grafton, ND, and brought before a United States magistrate judge for an initial appearance on December 22, 2009. He was ordered detained in federal custody pending his extradition hearing, which was held on February 16, 2010, in Grand Forks, ND, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal.

On April 15, 2010, Magistrate Judge Senechal issued a Memorandum and Order certifying that Ritzo was extraditable for the Canadian criminal offenses charged in the Extradition Complaint and ordering him detained. Ritzo appealed the extradition decision by filing a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus with the U.S. District Court on May 14, 2010, challenging the magistrate judge's determinations of probable cause and dual criminality, i.e., that Ritzo's conduct violated the criminal laws of both Canada and the United States. U.S. District Court Judge Ralph R. Erickson denied Ritzo's Petition on July 12, 2010, and entered a final Judgment of dismissal on August 5, 2010.

Ritzo then filed a Notice of Appeal with the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals from

the District Court's denial of his Petition for a Writ of Habeas Corpus. On January 19, 2011, while his appeal was still pending, Ritzo filed a Motion to Dismiss Appeal and Consent to Dismiss Appeal in which he stated his intent to forego the appeal and return to Canada to contest the pending criminal charges against him. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed Ritzo's appeal and entered a final Judgment against him on January 19, 2011.

On February 28, 2011, the Department of State issued a surrender warrant ordering Ritzo to be surrendered and delivered to Canadian authorities for extradition to Canada to face his pending criminal charges in Saskatchewan. On March 17, 2011, Ritzo was surrendered by the U. S. Marshals in Grand Forks to representatives of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for his return to Saskatchewan.

The United States' portion of the Ritzo extradition investigation was spearheaded by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations, and the U.S. Marshals Service and its International Investigations Branch. Assistance was also provided by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, ND Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Grafton Police Department, Pembina County Sheriff's Department, Walsh County Sheriff's Department, and Marshall County, Minnesota, Sheriff's Department. Canadian assistance was provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Saskatoon Police Service, and Saskatchewan Department of Justice.

Assistant United States Attorney Scott J. Schneider prosecuted the case on behalf of the Government of Canada.